

ORIGINAL EC COMICS FROM THE 1950s!



NO. 2
DEC



150
190
CANADA

SHOCK SUSPENSTORIES

**SHOCKING TALES OF
TENSION
IN THE
TRADITION!**



GIVE IT
TO HIM,
THE
DIRTY
RED!

YUH DON'T
LIKE IT HERE,
WHY DON'T YUH
GO BACK WHERE
YUH CAME FROM?

STOP IT! PLEASE!
WHAT YOU'RE DOING
IS *WRONG!*
ACT LIKE
AMERICANS!

BRACE YOURSELF FOR THE SHOCKING FINAL
TWIST TO THIS GRIPPING TALE OF TENSION...

KICKBACK!

**A CRIME
SUSPENSE STORY**

IT ALL BEGAN ABOUT A YEAR AFTER I MARRIED OSCAR HIGGINS! OSCAR WAS TWICE MY AGE... BUT HIS BANK BOOK SHOWED SIX FIGURES SO I MADE A PLAY FOR HIM! FINALLY I GOT HIM TO PROPOSE TO ME, AND THEN ACCEPTED COYLY! I DIDN'T LOVE HIM! I WAS ONLY INTERESTED IN SECURITY! THEN IT HAPPENED! AS I SAID, IT WAS ABOUT A YEAR AFTER HE'D BROUGHT ME TO HIS ISOLATED HOUSE! OSCAR HAD A **HEART ATTACK**...

WILL HE BE
ALL RIGHT,
DOCTOR?

CAN'T SAY FOR SURE, FREDA!
I'VE DONE ALL I CAN! WE
CAN ONLY WAIT AND SEE!
ACTUALLY HE SHOULD BE IN
A HOSPITAL, BUT I'M AFRAID
THAT MOVING HIM INTO TOWN
OVER THOSE BAD ROADS MIGHT
KILL HIM!

Jack
Kimmer

OSCAR ALWAYS HAD A BAD HEART! ONE OF THE REASONS I MARRIED HIM WAS THAT I FIGURED HE MIGHT POP OFF ANY MINUTE, AND HIS *DOUGH* WOULD BE *MINE*! ALTHOUGH I ACTED ALL UPSET, I SECRETLY *HOPED* HE WOULD DIE...

THE DOCTOR'S FACE WAS DARK WITH CONCERN! I GOT A LITTLE PANICKY! SOMETHING WAS UP...BUT *WHAT*?

TOUGH?
I...I DON'T UNDERSTAND!

YOUR HUSBAND'S HEART ATTACK HAS LEFT HIM *COMPLETELY PARALYZED*, FREDA! HE HAS ABSOLUTELY *NO CONTROL* OVER HIS *MUSCLES*! HE WILL BE *BED-RIDDEN* FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE!

HOW IS HE *TODAY*, DOCTOR?

BAD NEWS, FREDA! IT'S GOING TO BE PRETTY *TOUGH ON YOU* FROM NOW ON!

AT FIRST I WAS MERELY SHOCKED! BUT AS THE DAYS PASSED, THE FULL REALIZATION OF WHAT OSCAR'S CONDITION REALLY MEANT...AS FAR AS I WAS CONCERNED...HIT ME...

HE...HE'S LIKE A...A *BABY*! HE'S HELPLESS...
ABSOLUTELY HELPLESS!

OSCAR COULDN'T EVEN *TALK*, TO TELL ME WHAT HE WANTED OR NEEDED! ALL HE COULD DO WAS OPEN HIS MOUTH AND CHOKED OUT GUTTERAL SOUNDS WHEN HE WANTED ME...

U-H-H-H-N-PH-H!
U-R-R-G-G-H-H!

JUST A MINUTE, OSCAR!

OSCAR NEVER HAD ANY FRIENDS, AND LIVING IN THAT ISOLATED HOUSE DIDN'T HELP! THERE WERE NO NEIGHBORS FOR MILES! I HAD NO ONE TO TALK TO! I WAS ALONE...*ALONE WITH MY DROOLING, HELPLESS HUSBAND!*

U-U-M-M-N-G-G!

I...I'M SORRY, OSCAR! I DON'T UNDERSTAND YOU!

OSCAR COULD HEAR ME WHEN I SPOKE! IF HE WANTED SOMETHING, I HAD TO RUN DOWN A LIST UNTIL I HIT THE RIGHT ONE...

ARE YOU *THIRSTY*, OSCAR?

UN-N-N-N-GGG!

SLEEPY?

UN-N-N-N-NGG!

HUNGRY?

UR-R-R-R-A-GG!

I COULDN'T LEAVE HIM, NOT EVEN FOR AN HOUR! ONCE A WEEK I RUSHED INTO TOWN TO DO THE SHOPPING! WHEN I'D RETURNED, I'D USUALLY HAVE TO CLEAN OSCAR UP...

OH, LORD! HOW MUCH CAN I *STAND*?

I WAS HIS FULL-TIME NURSE! I HAD TO WASH HIM...



SHAVE HIM...



FEED HIM...

KEEP IT IN YOUR **MOUTH**, YOU **BLUBBERING IDIOT!** LIVING WITH YOU IS JUST LIKE LIVING WITH AN **IMBECILE!**



IT WENT ON LIKE THAT FOR A YEAR! I THOUGHT I'D GO OUT OF MY MIND...

WHY DON'T YOU **DIE**, ALREADY?
WHY DO YOU GO ON **LIVING...**
DAY AFTER DAY! DIE...
DO Y'HEAR?
DIE!

U-U-N-B-PH?



FINALLY I COULDN'T STAND IT ANY LONGER! I'D REACHED THE BREAKING POINT...

I'M GOING OUT! I HAVEN'T BEEN TO A MOVIE SINCE YOU GOT SICK! WELL... **I'M GOING TONIGHT!**



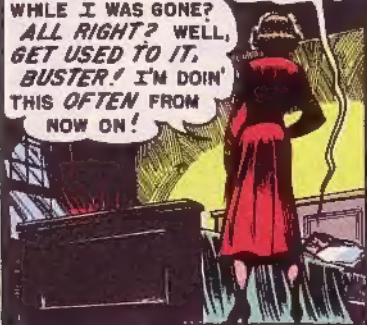
HE STARED AT ME WITH THOSE WIDE, PLEADING EYES...

YOU'VE BEEN FED! YOU CAN LAST TILL I GET BACK! GOOD-BYE!



THAT NIGHT I DROVE INTO TOWN AND WENT TO A MOVIE! I FELT A LITTLE BETTER AFTERWARDS! IT DID ME GOOD TO GET AWAY FROM THAT ISOLATED HOUSE! EXCEPT FOR THOSE OCCASIONAL SHOPPING TRIPS, I'D BEEN COOPED UP THERE LIKE A PRISONER...

HOW WERE YOU WHILE I WAS GONE? U-N-N-U-WGH...
ALL RIGHT? WELL, GET USED TO IT, BUSTER! I'M DOIN' THIS OFTEN FROM NOW ON!



I LEANED OVER HIM...TORMENTING HIM...

AN' MAYBE ONE NIGHT I'LL GO AWAY AND NOT COME BACK! WHAT'D HAPPEN TO YOU THEN, HUH? YOU'D STARVE! YOU COULDN'T EVEN GET YOURSELF A DRINK OF WATER! YOU'D STARVE TO DEATH!

G-U-U-U-G-GH!



AND THEN, ON ONE OF THOSE FREQUENT ESCAPES INTO TOWN, I MET RICK! HE WAS BIG AND HANDSOME...AND I WAS LONELY...

THERE'S A ROAD-HOUSE A COUPLE OF MILES OUT! WE COULD DANCE A LITTLE!

I'M WILLING! LET'S GO, RICK!



I SAW RICK OFTEN! AT FIRST IT WAS JUST FOR LAUGHS...BUT AFTER A FEW DATES, IT GOT SERIOUS...



I LOVE YOU, FRED! I...I NEED YOU...

OH, RICK! KISS ME...

AND THEN, ONE NIGHT, I TOLD RICK ALL ABOUT OSCAR! HE WAS ANGRY WITH ME FOR NOT TELLING HIM IN THE BEGINNING...



YOU...YOU SHOULD HAVE TOLD ME YOU WERE MARRIED, FRED!

I...I WAS AFRAID TO, RICK! I WAS AFRAID YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO SEE ME IF YOU KNEW!

BUT AFTER A WHILE, HE COOLED OFF...



WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO, BABY? HUH?

I CAN'T DIVORCE HIM, RICK! IT'LL MEAN GIVING UP HIS DOUGH! IF HE WERE TO DIE...IT'D BE MINE... EVERY CENT!



BUT I LOVE YOU, FRED! I WANT TO MARRY YOU!

BE PATIENT, RICK! BE PATIENT! HOW LONG CAN HE GO ON LIVING LIKE THAT?

AND THEN THE DOCTOR TOLD
ME HOW LONG...

WHY, YOUR HUSBAND COULD
LIVE TO A RIPE OLD AGE WITH
THE KIND OF WONDERFUL ATTENTION
HE GETS FROM YOU,
FREDA!

OH?

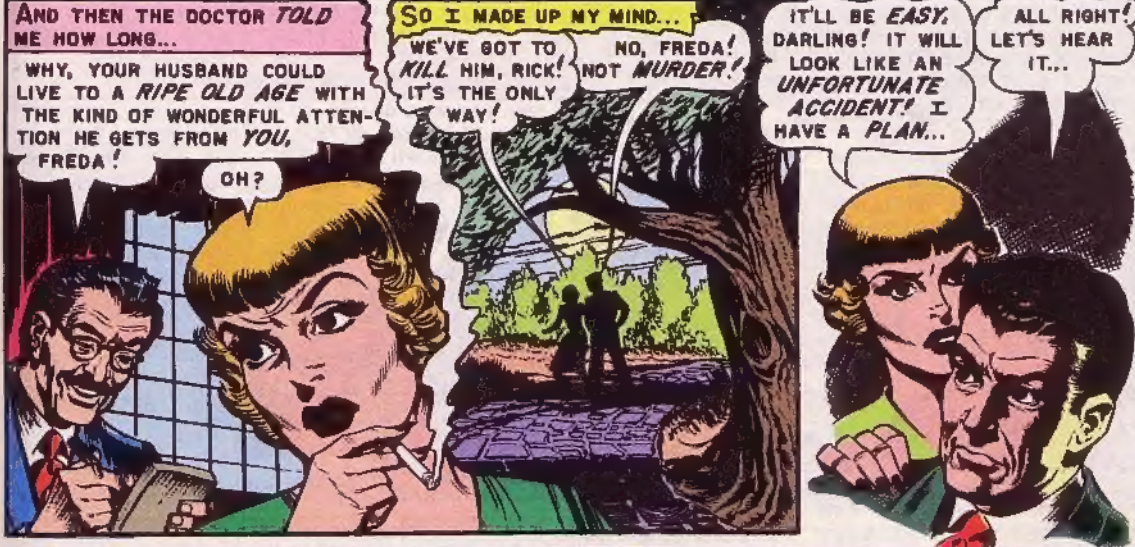
SO I MADE UP MY MIND...

WE'VE GOT TO
KILL HIM, RICK!
IT'S THE ONLY
WAY!

NO, FREDA!
NOT MURDER!

IT'LL BE EASY,
DARLING! IT WILL
LOOK LIKE AN
UNFORTUNATE
ACCIDENT! I
HAVE A PLAN...

ALL RIGHT!
LET'S HEAR
IT...



THE FOLLOWING DAY, A COUPLE OF MEN CAME TO
THE HOUSE...

WE'RE FROM THE
AJAX CONSTRUCTION
COMPANY!

OH, YES!
COME IN!



NEXT, I HAD THEM RIP OFF THE OLD CELLAR
DOOR AND PUT ON A BIG THICK ONE...

...AND I'D LIKE YOU TO
INSTALL A SNAP-LOCK
SO IT WILL LOCK SHUT
BY ITSELF!

ANYTHING YOU
SAY, LADY!



I TOOK THE WORKMEN DOWN INTO THE CELLAR...

THAT'S RIGHT! I WANT
BARS ON EVERY WINDOW!
I'M...SO AFRAID OF PROWL-
ERS...AND MY HUSBAND IS
HELPLESS!

OKAY, LADY! WE
GOT YUH! C'MON,
FRITZY! LET'S
GET TO WORK!



THEN I HAD THE WORKMAN PUT UP SOME SHELVES
IN THE CELLAR...

I WANT TO KEEP
SOME CANNED GOODS
DOWN HERE!

SORT OF A
PANTRY, EH,
LADY?



EVERYTHING WAS SET! I STOCKED THE PANTRY IN THE CELLAR WITH CANNED MEATS, VEGETABLES, AND FRUIT JUICES! THEN RICK CAME OVER! OSCAR JUST STARED WITH HIS EXPRESSIONLESS EYES, HIS MOUTH DRIBBLING...

YOU'VE GOT TO HELP ME EMPTY THE CELLAR OF ANY **TOOLS** I MIGHT BE ABLE TO USE TO **ESCAPE WITH, RICK!**

YEAH! I GET IT, FREDA!

RICK BUSTED A COUPLE OF CELLAR WINDOWS AND BANGED UP THE BIG THICK DOOR TO MAKE IT LOOK GOOD! MEANWHILE, OSCAR...THE POOR Slobbering FOOL... TRIED TO FIGURE OUT WHAT WAS GOING ON...

THE MAN WHO COMES TO READ THE **ELECTRIC METER** IN THE CELLAR WILL BE HERE IN THREE WEEKS! HE'LL LET ME OUT!

IF I DON'T HEAR FROM YOU BY THEN, I'LL COME MYSELF!

U-U-UGH? W-U-U-N?

RICK TOOK ME IN HIS ARMS AND KISSED ME...RIGHT THERE IN FRONT OF PARALYZED, HELPLESS OSCAR! I THOUGHT HIS EYES WOULD POP RIGHT OUT OF HIS HEAD.

SEE, YOU, 'BYE, RICK! U-U-UH? HONEY!

THEN HE WAS GONE! I TURNED TO MY BEDRIDDEN, DROOLING HUSBAND AND SNEERED...

A TERRIBLE 'ACCIDENT' IS GONNA HAPPEN NOW, OSCAR! I'M GONNA GET LOCKED IN THE CELLAR! AND YOU...YOU'RE GONNA STARVE TO DEATH!

I WENT DOWN INTO THE CELLAR, AND THE GREAT BIG NEW DOOR WITH THE SNAP-LOCK CLICKED SHUT BEHIND ME! I COULD HEAR OSCAR'S FAINT GUTTERAL CRIES BEYOND IT...

U-UH-UH-N-N-N! F-U-R-N-N-N-6

CLICK

I SETTLED DOWN FOR A LONG STAY! UPSTAIRS, AS THE DAYS PASSED, OSCAR'S EERIE WAILS AND BLOOD-CURDLING YELLS GREW WEAKER AND WEAKER.

FOUR DAYS! FOUR DAYS WITHOUT FOOD OR WATER! HE OUGHT TO BE DEAD BY NOW!

FINALLY, OSCAR'S HOWLING STOPPED! SILENCE CLOSED IN! MEANWHILE, I WAS LIVING ON THE CANNED GOODS I'D STORED IN THE CELLAR...

UGH! COLD MEAT! OH, WELL! IT'S BETTER THAN NOTHING!

AFTER THREE WEEKS OF WAITING... GROWING MORE NERVOUS EACH DAY... I HEARD THE DOOR-BELL UPSTAIRS...

ELECTRIC!
ANYBODY HOME?

HELP! HELP!

I SCREAMED AND YELLED! I PUT ON A BIG ACT!
I BAWLED LIKE A BABY WHEN THE METER-READER LET ME OUT...

I'VE BEEN... LOCKED IN...
SOB...SOB! MY HUSBAND...
MY HUSBAND...

YOUR HUSBAND IS
DEAD, LADY!

THE COPS LISTENED TO MY STORY...

THE DOOR LOCKED
BEHIND ME! I
COULDN'T GET OUT!
I WAS TRAPPED...
TRAPPED!

HOW
COME YOU
HAD THE
WINDOWS
BARRED,
LADY?

I WAS AFRAID!
MY HUSBAND WAS
HELPLESS! I WAS
AFRAID OF PROWL-
ERS! I HAD THE
SNAP-LOCK PUT ON
THE DOOR IN CASE
I FORGOT TO
LOCK IT! AND...
SOB...IT...SOB...
LOCKED ME
IN...

TAKE
IT
EASY,
LADY!

I TRIED TO
ESCAPE! I
YELLED AND
SCREAMED
TILL I WAS
HOARSE!
POOR OSCAR!
SOB...POOR
OSCAR! HE
WAS SO...SOB...
SO HELPLESS!

IT WASN'T
YOUR
FAULT,
MA'AM! IT
WAS AN
ACCIDENT!
YOU
COULDN'T
HELP
IT!

THEY FELL FOR IT! THE CASE WAS CLOSED, AND I WAS CLEAR! I CLEANED OUT THE CELLAR, HAD THE BROKEN WINDOWS REPLACED, AND LOCKED IT UP FOR GOOD! I NEVER WANTED TO GO DOWN THERE AGAIN! I KNEW IT WOULD BE A LONG TIME BEFORE I'D FORGET THAT THREE-WEEK ORDEAL... LISTENING TO OSCAR'S FADING CRIES AS HE SLOWLY STARVED TO DEATH! I HIRED A LAWYER TO SETTLE MY HUSBAND'S ESTATE...

SINCE YOUR HUSBAND
LEFT NO WILL, MRS.
HIGGINS...

...IT WILL BE SEVERAL
MONTHS UNTIL THE PRO-
CEEDS OF HIS ESTATE
CAN BE TURNED OVER TO
YOU!

DO YOUR BEST,
MR. DAVIDSON!

RICK AND I 'MET' EACH OTHER SOON AFTER! IT WAS ALL VERY PROPER, AND AROUSED NO SUSPICION.

FREDA HIGGINS!
THIS IS RICK
LARIDALE!

HOW DO
YOU DO,
RICK?

GLAD TO
MEET
YOU,
FREDA!

RICK WAS VERY ANXIOUS TO MARRY ME, BUT I CAUTIONED HIM...

WE'VE GOT TO
WAIT, RICK!
PEOPLE MIGHT
TALK!

OKAY,
FREDA!
ANYTHING
YOU SAY!

MEANWHILE, MR. DAVIDSON WAS WORKING ON OSCAR'S ESTATE... TRYING TO SETTLE IT! MONTHS WENT BY! FINALLY, RICK AND I WERE MARRIED! WE STAYED AT THE HOUSE...

I HATE THIS PLACE,
RICK! JUST AS SOON
AS EVERYTHING'S
SETTLED, WE'LL
SELL IT!

OKAY WITH
ME!

AND THEN I GOT A CALL FROM NEW YORK! MR. DAVIDSON, MY LAWYER, NEEDED ME THERE TO WIND UP THE ESTATE...

I'LL GO WITH
YOU, FREDA!

NO, RICK! I DON'T
THINK THAT WOULD
LOOK RIGHT! I'D
BETTER GO ALONE!

I WENT WITHOUT HIM! I WAS GONE ALMOST FOUR DAYS! WHEN I GOT BACK...

RICK! I'M HOME! RICK!
RICK?

I FOUND RICK IN THE CELLAR! HE WAS UNCONSCIOUS! HIS FISTS WERE BLOODY AND RAW FROM POUNDING ON THE DOOR! HE MUST HAVE BEEN SEARCHING FOR THE CANNED GOODS I'D REMOVED, AND THE DOOR HAD LOCKED BEHIND HIM! HE WAS ALMOST DEAD FROM LACK OF FOOD AND WATER...

MY DARLING!
MY DARLING!

I NURSED RICK BACK TO HEALTH! BUT SOMETHING HAD HAPPENED TO HIM WHILE HE WAS IMPRISONED IN THE CELLAR! HIS MIND HAD SNAPPED! HE CAN'T TALK! HE CAN'T MOVE! HE'S PARALYZED! HE JUST LIES THERE... STARING! HE'S LIKE A HELPLESS BABY! I HAVE TO FEED HIM... WASH HIM...

SHAVE HIM! HE'S
COMPLETELY OUT
OF HIS MIND! A
BABBLING IDIOT!
OSCAR... AT
LEAST... COULD
UNDERSTAND
ME WHEN
I SPOKE...

THE
END

9

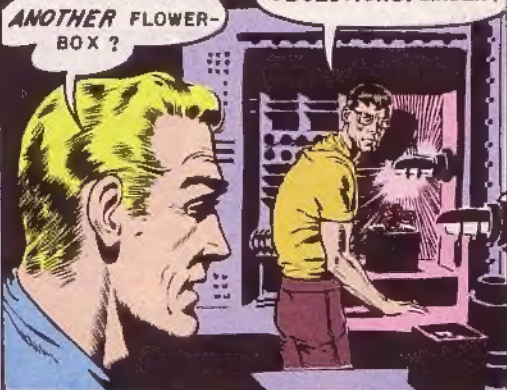
THE WIND-UP TO THIS SCIENCE-FICTION
YARN SHOULD GIVE YOU QUITE A JOLT...!

GEE, DAD... IT'S A DAISY!

LIEUTENANT STANLEY LINDEN, ASTRO-NAVIGATOR OF THE EXPLORATION ROCKET-SHIP *ORION-W*, EYED THE OBLONG CONTAINER HALF-FILLED WITH SOIL THAT RESTED BENEATH THE GLOWING INFRA-RED TUBE! NEAR HIM, LIEUTENANT ARNOLD HARTLY, ROCKET-ENGINEER, BUSIED HIMSELF WITH ANOTHER CONTAINER, THIS ONE FILLED WITH FLOWERS...

WHAT'S THIS, HARTLY?
YOU STARTING
ANOTHER FLOWER-
BOX?

THAT'S RIGHT! ANY
OBJECTIONS, LINDEN?



LIEUTENANT LINDEN MOVED TO LIEUTENANT HARTLY'S SIDE AND WATCHED AS ARNOLD CAREFULLY PRUNED THE FLOWERING PLANT HE HAD CULTIVATED...

BOY! YOU CERTAINLY
ARE *BUGS* ON THESE
THINGS, HARTLY! WHAT'S
THIS ONE CALLED?

DON'T TOUCH! THAT'S
A SHASTA DAISY! LOOK,
STAN! I'VE TOLD YOU
OVER AND OVER! *DON'T
TOUCH THE FLOWERS!*



A SCIENCE-FICTION SUSPENSE STORY

LIEUTENANT LINDEN SHRUGGED AND MOVED DOWN THE CREW'S QUARTERS TO A SMALL GROUP OF OFFICERS GATHERED AROUND A CARD TABLE...



DEAL ME IN, SEGAL!

SURE THING, STAN!

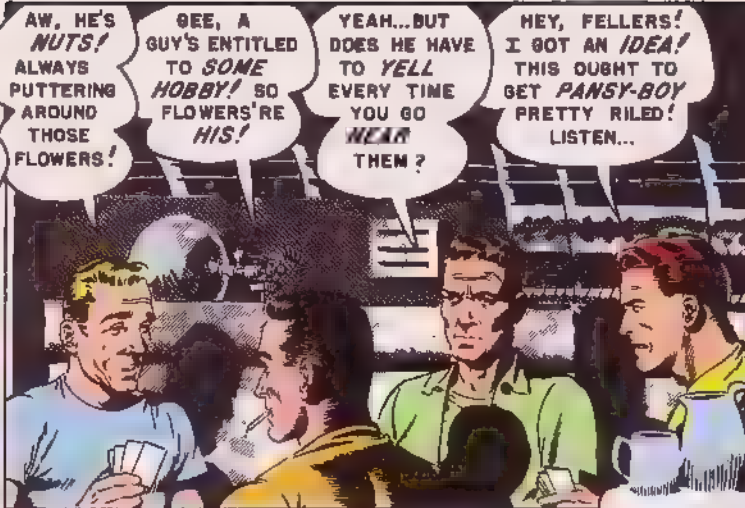
HEY! I HEARD HARTLY YAPPING AT YOU! WHY DON'T YOU LAY OFF?

AW, HE'S NUTS! ALWAYS PUTTERING AROUND THOSE FLOWERS!

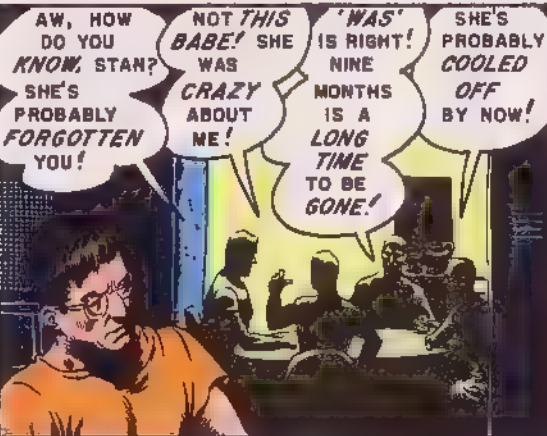
GEE, A GUY'S ENTITLED TO SOME HOBBY! SO FLOWERS'RE HIS!

YEAH...BUT DOES HE HAVE TO YELL EVERY TIME YOU GO NEAR THEM?

HEY, FELLERS! I GOT AN IDEA! THIS OUGHT TO GET PANSY-BOY PRETTY RILED! LISTEN...



LIEUTENANT HARTLY TURNED FROM WATERING HIS TINY GARDEN, AS THE VOICES AT THE CARD TABLE ROSE...



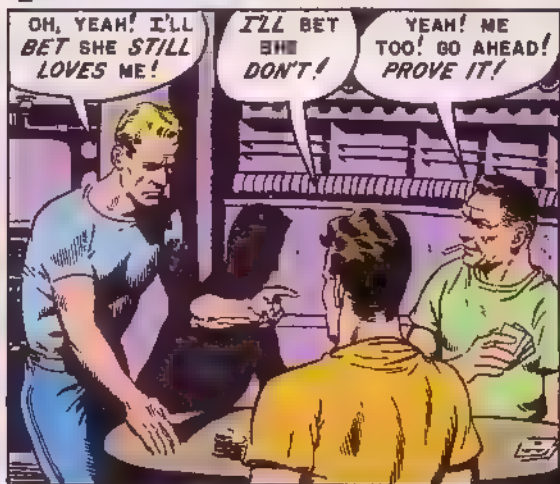
AW, HOW DO YOU KNOW, STAN? SHE'S PROBABLY FORGOTTEN YOU!

NOT THIS BABE! SHE WAS CRAZY ABOUT ME!

'WAS' IS RIGHT! NINE MONTHS IS A LONG TIME TO BE GONE!

SHE'S PROBABLY COOLED OFF BY NOW!

LIEUTENANT LINDEN GOT TO HIS FEET ANGRILY...

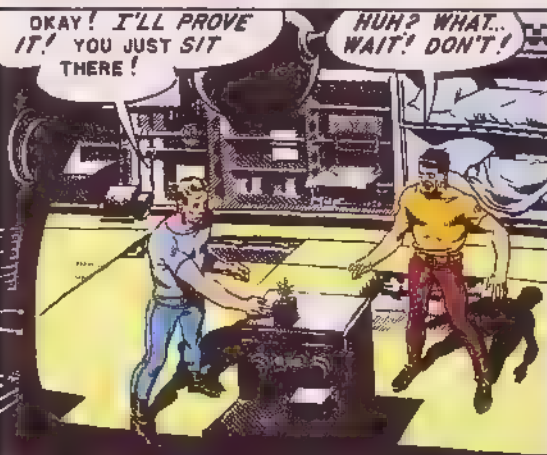


OH, YEAH! I'LL BET SHE STILL LOVES ME!

I'LL BET SHE DON'T!

YEAH! ME TOO! GO AHEAD! PROVE IT!

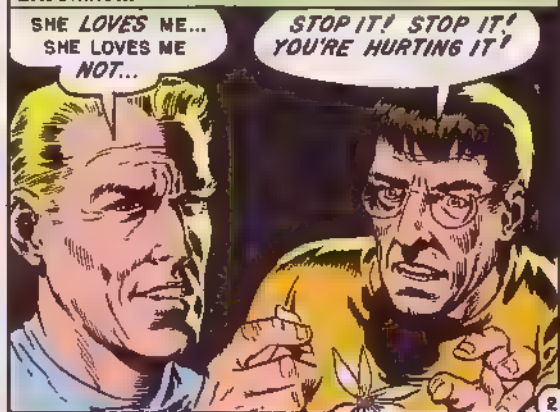
LIEUTENANT LINDEN DARTED ACROSS THE CREW'S QUARTERS TOWARD LIEUTENANT HARTLY...



OKAY! I'LL PROVE IT! YOU JUST SIT THERE!

HUH? WHAT? WAIT! DON'T!

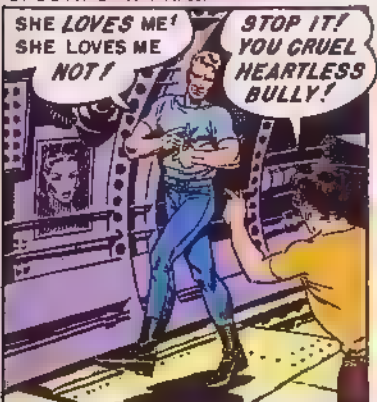
LIEUTENANT LINDEN TORE THE SHASTA DAISY FROM LIEUTENANT HARTLY'S FLOWER BOX AS THE OTHERS COVERED THEIR MOUTHS TO KEEP FROM LAUGHING...



SHE LOVES ME... SHE LOVES ME NOT...

STOP IT! STOP IT! YOU'RE HURTING IT!

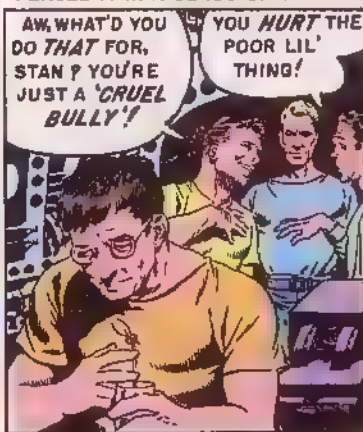
STANLEY LINDEN DANCED ABOUT THE CREW'S QUARTERS PLUCKING THE PETALS FROM THE DAISY AS ARNOLD HARTLY STUMBLED AFTER HIM... SHOUTING AT HIM...



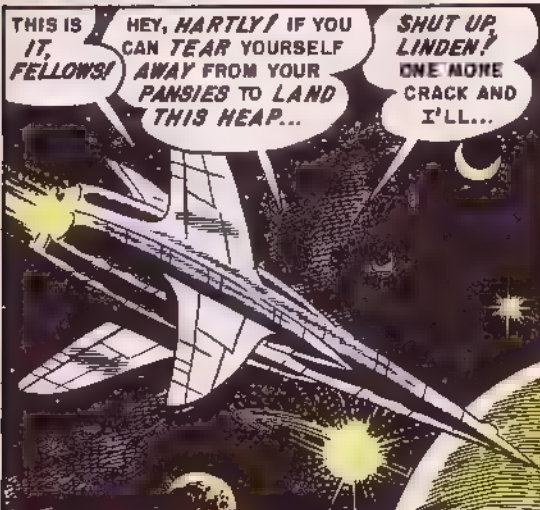
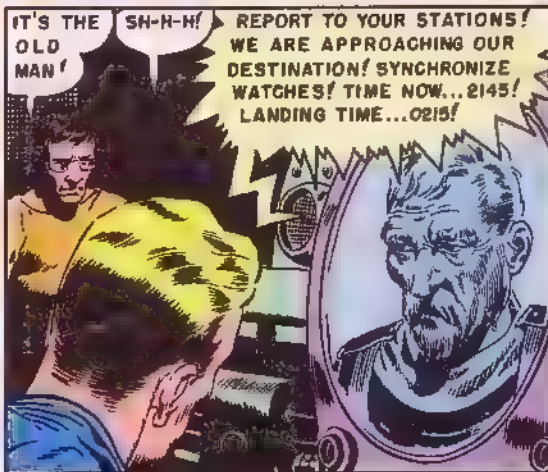
FINALY LINDEN FINALLY LINDEN
HELD UP THE PLUCKED FLOWER!
ONLY ONE PETAL REMAINED...



LIEUTENANT HARTLY SNATCHED THE MANGLED FLOWER FROM HIS ANTAGONIST'S HAND AND CARRIED IT TENDERLY TO HIS BUNK WHERE HE PLACED IT IN A GLASS OF WATER...



LIEUTENANT HARTLY SPUN AROUND RED-FACED! HE GLARED AT HIS GRINNING MOCKERS...



AT 0215 EARTH TIME, THE ORION-W CAME TO REST ON THE SURFACE OF THE PLANET THAT HAD REQUIRED NINE MONTHS OF HURLING ACROSS THE VOID OF SPACE AT TEN TIMES THE SPEED OF LIGHT TO REACH...

OUTSIDE TEMPERATURE... SEVENTY SIX DEGREES FAHRENHEIT!

OXYGEN CONTENT OF ATMOSPHERE, SUFFICIENT! NO NEED FOR SPACE-SUITS!



SOON A PORT IN THE SIDE OF THE GIANT STEEL MONSTER OPENED AND A LADDER UNFURLED! ONE BY ONE, THE SPACE-EXPLORERS DESCENDED...

ANY SIGN OF LIFE, COMMANDER?



I THOUGHT I SAW SOME SMALL ANIMALS MOVING ABOUT AT THE EDGE OF THE CLEARING!

THE ORION-W HAD LANDED IN AN OPEN FIELD SURROUNDED BY A THICK WALL OF STRANGE VEGETATION...

YOU'RE RIGHT, SIR! LOOK! THERE'S ONE OF THE CREATURES NOW!

DICKSON! GET THE AUTOMATIC TRANSLATOR DOWN HERE! LET'S SEE IF THESE THINGS ARE INTELLIGENT!



AN ELECTRONIC DEVICE, WHICH WHEN PROPERLY SET COULD TRANSLATE ALIEN THOUGHTS AND SPEECH INTO ENGLISH, WAS LOWERED FROM THE SHIP...



GETTING ANY SIGNALS, DICKSON?

NOTHING, SIR! LOOKS LIKE THOSE THINGS ARE NON-COMMUNICATIVE!

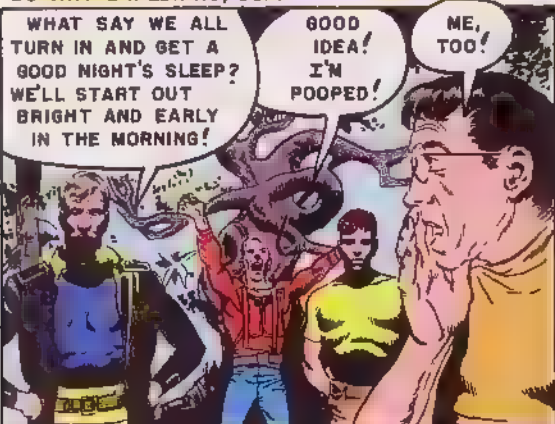
THE AUTOMATIC TRANSLATOR WAS ADJUSTED AND READJUSTED WITH NO RESULTS! FINALLY...

OKAY, DICKSON! FORGET IT! PERHAPS WE'LL FIND AN INTELLIGENT FORM OF ANIMAL LIFE WHEN WE BEGIN OUR EXPLORING! NOW, LET'S SET UP A CAMP!

HOT DOG! WE SLEEP IN THE OPEN TONIGHT! THAT'S A WELCOME CHANGE FROM BEING COOPED UP IN THE SHIP!



BY THE TIME THE SPACE-TRAVELERS HAD SET UP THEIR PLASTO-TENTS, DARKNESS HAD CREPT ACROSS THE ALIEN PLANET'S SKY! IT WAS TOO LATE TO DO ANY EXPLORING, SO...



WHAT SAY WE ALL TURN IN AND GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP? WE'LL START OUT BRIGHT AND EARLY IN THE MORNING!

GOOD IDEA! I'M POOPED!

ME, TOO!

BUT AS MORNING DAWNED OVER THE STRANGE TERRAIN...

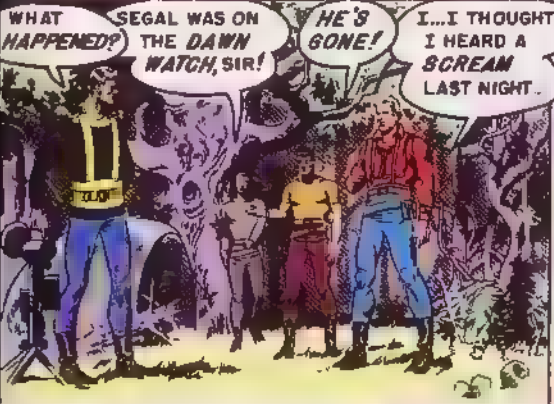
COMMANDER! COMMANDER! WAKE UP, SIR!

HUH? WHA...?

IT'S SEGAL! HE'S GONE! DISAPPEARED!



COMMANDER MORRIS, OFFICER-IN-CHARGE OF THE ORION-W, CAME OUT OF HIS PLASTO-TENT AND LOOKED AROUND AT THE FACES OF HIS MEN, NOW PALED WITH FEAR...



AS THE SEARCH PARTY STARTED OFF TOWARD THE EDGE OF THE CLEARING, HARTLY GASPED...



HARTLY AND LINDEN SPURTED ACROSS THE OPEN FIELD TOWARD WHERE THE SEARCH PARTY HAD STOPPED! SEGAL...OR WHAT WAS LEFT OF HIM...LAY BEFORE THEM...



PERHAPS HE WANDERED OFF! LET'S LOOK FOR HIM!



ALL RIGHT! HARTLY! YOU STAY HERE AND GUARD THE SHIP! LINDEN, YOU TOO!

THE REST COME WITH ME!

LIEUTENANT LINDEN FOLLOWED LIEUTENANT HARTLY'S STARE...

GO ON! YOU'RE NUTS! WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO TELL ME, 'MACBETH... THAT THE TREES ARE MOVING IN?

I COULD SWEAR THE FOLIAGE WAS FURTHER AWAY YESTERDAY!



SUDDENLY THE SEARCHING PARTY STOPPED AT THE EDGE OF THE CLEARING! THEY WERE STUDYING SOMETHING ON THE GROUND...



THEY BURIED LIEUTENANT SEGAL'S REMAINS AND RETURNED TO CAMP! THAT NIGHT, DOUBLE GUARDS WERE POSTED! THEN, TOWARDS MORNING, LIEUTENANT HARTLY WAS AWAKENED BY A CRACKLING SOUND...



LINDEN! LISTEN! HEAR THAT?

HUH? WHA...? HEY! SOUNDS LIKE STATIC! I KNOW! THE AUTO-MATIC TRANSLATOR!

LIEUTENANT LINDEN LEAPED OFF HIS AIR-COT AND OPENED THE FLAP OF HIS PLASTO-TENT! OUTSIDE IT WAS PITCH BLACK! SUDDENLY, THE DARKNESS WAS KNIFED BY TWO EAR-SPLITTING SHRIEKS...

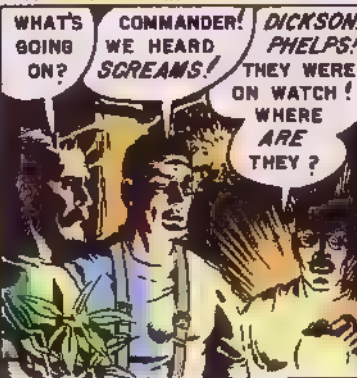


GOOD LORD!

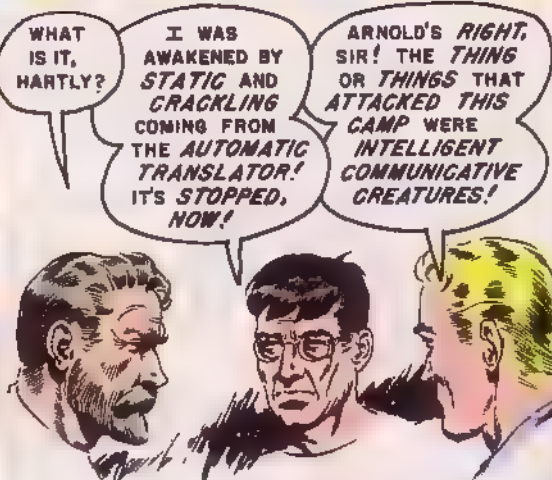
THE NIGHT WAS FILLED WITH A THRASHING AND RUSTLING! LIEUTENANT LINDEN SHOUTED TO LIEUTENANT HARTLY...



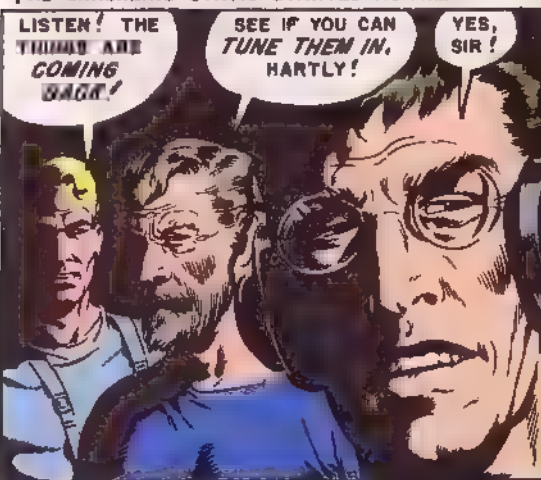
THE YELLOW-AMBER BEAM OF THE SODIUM LAMP PUNCHED THROUGH THE INKY BLACKNESS SURROUNDING THE CAMP! NOTHING COULD BE SEEN! THE CLEARING WAS BARE...



LINDEN AND HARTLY AND COMMANDER MORRIS STARED AT EACH OTHER, THEIR FACES GHOSTLY IN THE SODIUM LAMP'S GOLD LIGHT...



THE CRACKLING STATIC STARTED AGAIN...



HARTLY BENT OVER THE AUTOMATIC TRANSLATOR, SPINNING DIALS... FLICKING SWITCHES! SUDDENLY, THERE WAS A FAINT RUSTLING BEYOND THE CAMP... IN THE DARKNESS! A SNAKE-LIKE FORM REACHED INTO THE CIRCLE OF LIGHT CAST BY THE SODIUM LAMP AND WRAPPED ITSELF AROUND COMMANDER MORRIS'S LEG...



HARTLY AND LINDEN WATCHED, HORRIFIED, AS THE COMMANDER WAS DRAGGED TO THE BASE OF THE STRANGE FOLIAGE THAT HAD CLOSED IN ON THE CLEARING...

THE TREES! THEIR ROOTS.

INTELLIGENT... ANIMAL-EATING PLANTS!



THE SHIP'S CAPTAIN WAS SWALLOWED UP IN THE POD-LIKE STRUCTURE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE ALIEN PLANT! LATER, HIS DRIED AND SHRIVELED BODY WAS DISGORGED...

HOW HORRIBLE!

WE'VE GOT TO GET AWAY FROM HERE!



HARTLY AND LINDEN STARTED FOR THE SHIP! IN HIS HASTE, LINDEN STUMBLED OVER THE AUTOMATIC TRANSLATOR...

LET'S GO! MAKE A RUN FOR THE SHIP!

RIGHT BEHIND YOU... OOPS!



THE MACHINE TOPPLED OVER AND LINDEN WENT SPRAWLING! THE CRACKLING STATIC WAS CUT SHORT, AND SHRILL HIGH-PITCHED VOICES RASPED FROM THE ELECTRONIC TRANSLATOR

BUT...HOW...CAN... YOU...BE...SURE THAT THE SHE-VINE IS...YOUR... BELOVED, SHRDNU?

I...WILL... PROVE...IT TO...YOU, VICHNU!

LINDEN! GET UP! LOOK OUT!



LIEUTENANT HARTLY STARTED TOWARD HIS TRAPPED FELLOW SPACE-EXPLORER... THEN STOPPED! HE WATCHED IN HORROR AS LIEUTENANT LINDEN WAS LIFTED HIGH INTO THE AIR BY THE SWIRLING, CLUTCHING ROOT-VINES...



GOOD LORD! THE TREES ARE TEARING HIM APART!

LIEUTENANT LINDEN STRUGGLED TO HIS FEET AND STUMBLED FORWARD! CURLING THROBBING ROOTS SHOT OUT FROM THE FOLIAGE BEHIND HIM, ENCIRCLING HIS LEGS... HIS ARMS...

HELP! HARTLY! I'M CAUGHT!

I'LL GET YOU, LINDEN!

HOW...CAN... YOU...PROVE... IT, SHRDNU? WATCH... VICHNU!



HARTLY TURNED HIS HEAD AND COVERED HIS EYES TO HIDE THE GORY SIGHT, BUT LIEUTENANT LINDEN'S HYSTERICAL BLOOD-CURDLING SHRIEKS CONTINUED AS THE VINE-ROOTS TORE HIS ARMS AND LEGS FROM HIS BODY, ONE BY ONE! THE SHRILL VOICE FROM THE ELECTRONIC TRANSLATOR WAS QUITE AUDIBLE...



SHE...LOVES... ME! SHE LOVES ME...NOT! SHE... LOVES...ME! SHE...

THE END



TIME TO KILL!

Charlie Small sneered as he looked at the small vial of fluid in his hand: it contained enough sensitized nitroglycerine to blast his tiny apartment to kingdom-come! With his wife in it, of course!

This little bottle was going to end 6 years of living death, Charlie thought ... 6 interminable years of nagging and being treated like a kid who was barely able to take care of himself.

"Charr-LEEEE! Stop daydreaming over your packing or you'll miss that 7 o'clock bus!" Edna's screeching startled him and he almost dropped the vial. "I'm ironing your last shirt now, Charlie. It'll be ready in a minute!"

He had to act fast now ... time was running out! Reaching for the alarm clock ticking away on his night-table, he unscrewed the back and removed the alarm bell, exposing the clapper. Then, with infinite care, he set the deadly vial next to it and replaced the backplate.

His hands trembled as he set the alarm for 7. All at once he was conscious of a knot of anticipation tightening in his throat. When that alarm went off, Charlie mused, he would have committed the *perfect murder*!

"Hurry up, Charlie! You're as slow and disorganized as ever!" Edna

dashed into the bedroom with his shirt. "Put your tie on," she said in exasperation, "I'll finish your packing!"

Charlie hummed to himself as he adjusted his tie in front of the bathroom mirror. Another day with this insufferable shrew and he'd probably go mad!

Edna had his valise ready for him when he walked back into the kitchen. "It's 6:30 already!" Edna whined. "You'll be late as usual! Don't forget your valise! And make sure you have the tickets ..."

Brushing his lips against her cheek, Charlie smiled. *This is the last time I'll ever see you alive*, Edna, he thought.

Once outside, Charlie walked up the street ... then crossed and ducked into a nearby hallway. Dropping his valise, he looked back at the light in his apartment. His wristwatch showed 6:50 ... the fatal alarm was set to go off in 10 minutes! Just 600 seconds more and the scrupulously careful housewife he hated would be blown to bits!

Unconsciously, Charlie counted off the last minute, second-by-second! 10 seconds left, he gloated ... 8 ... 5 ...! In delicious anticipation of his new freedom, he patted the valise beside him in the doorway. The valise into which hated, hen-pecking Edna ... careful and precise housewife that she was ... had thoughtfully packed the alarm-clock from Charlie Small's night-table, at the last minute before his departure!

HIDING PLACE

The ease with which Mike Kleatt opened the display case was almost enough to make him laugh aloud. This was the way a job *should* go off: case a job adequately, Mike used to tell his intimates, and the actual lifting itself is a lead-pipe cinch. That held true whether it was a kid you were snatching for ransom from some rich geezer's mansion... or priceless gems like these ancient Inca Crown Jewels he had just slipped into the secret pocket of his jacket lining!

According to the newspaper articles which attracted Mike in the first place, the jewels were worth a cool *quarter-million!* Not a bad day's work, he thought to himself. Now all he had to do was walk casually through the mob of customers being steered around the Museum by the old guides, and he was free and clear.

Not a cop in sight, Mike exulted as he moved through the Aztec Room... past the vast Mayan Hall... into the chamber which housed the European Torture Devices. Nothing to stop him from sauntering out of the joint, free as a bird...

The weird siren wailing someplace down the hall made him stop in his tracks. A rasping voice echoed down the corridors: "Someone's cracked the Inca Gem Case... the Crown Jewels are missing! Alert the police at the front gates... nobody leaves the building without being searched!"

Mike could hear the sound of heavy footsteps lumbering up the stairs which led to the Museum entrance. That way was cut off! He whirled and started back through the Renaissance Torture Room: footsteps were hurrying toward him from *that* direction, too! The joint was sealed up tight! His best bet was to

find a snug *hiding place!* Laying low until the joint closed, he'd stand a good chance of getting away after dark. Of course he *could* just dump the jewels and scam... but it was totally inconceivable that Mike Kleatt should abandon the fabulously valuable loot after he had gotten his hands on it!

Footsteps were approaching now along the corridor; probably the cops making a room-by-room search! He turned frantically... at the far side was a metal suit like one of those uniforms he had once seen in a book about some old yegg named King Arthur. It was on the skimpy side, but with a little squeezing Mike could make it!

He squirmed into the suit with just seconds to spare. For the voices were coming right up to his hiding place. 'Carefully he drew his gun, hardly able to breathe so cramped was he for space. The first guy to step up to him would get a bellyful of lead, Mike vowed grimly.

A voice outside was speaking: "This suit of Mail," it was saying, "is a splendid example of the Metal Renaissance Torture Chamber. By turning this handle I release dozens of razor-sharp spikes... each 6 inches long... which line the inside of the suit from head to foot. They slide inward toward the center with deadly effect!"

Mike gasped just once as the long slivers of metal moved rapidly toward him from all sides. He tried to scream, but the sound was choked off into a death rattle as a long spike drove through his throat. Others were knifing through his face, his arms, his chest...

"A man imprisoned in this fiendish device," the voice droned on, "would be utterly unrecognizable after just one turn of the handle!"

HERE IS AN ELECTRIFYING STORY WITH SOLID IMPACT
IN ITS STARTLING CONCLUSION!

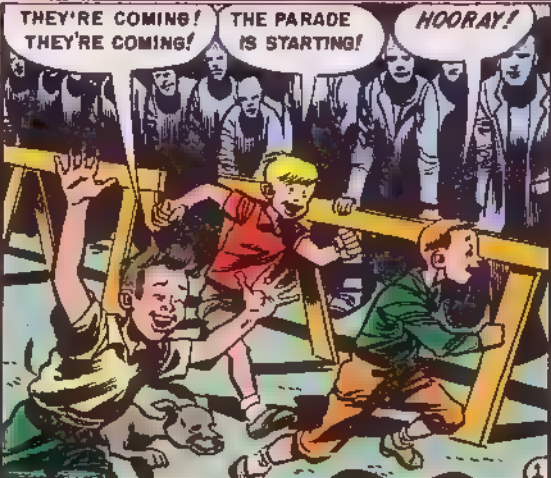
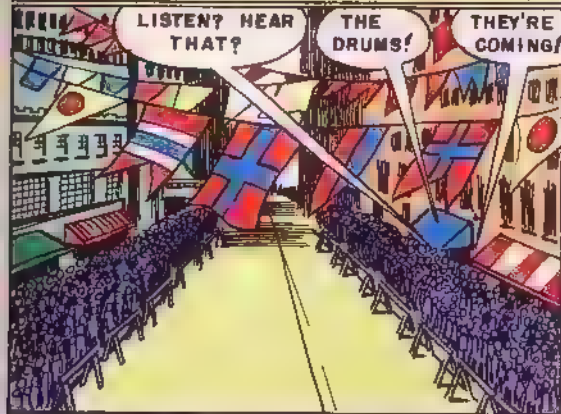
THE PATRIOTS!



**A SHOCK
SUSPENSE STORY**

AN AIR OF EXPECTANCY BLANKETED THE MURMURING CROWD THAT ALREADY HAD BEGUN TO LINE THE SIDEWALKS! A FAINT BREEZE STIRRED OVERHEAD, RIPPLING THE BUNTING THAT HUNG FROM WIRES STRUNG TAUT ACROSS THE TOWN'S MAIN STREET...

LAUGHING CHILDREN SCAMPED DOWN THE SPOTLESS STREET SHOUTING AND YELLING...



FROM FAR OFF, THE FAINT BOOM-BOOM OF A BASE DRUM DRIFTED THROUGH THE WARM SPRING AIR! ALL EYES WERE TURNED... FACING IN THE DIRECTION OF THE SOUND...WAITING... STRAINING TO SEE...



A TRIM YOUNG WOMAN TURNED TO HER HUSBAND WHO STOOD AT THE CURB-EDGE BESIDE HER...

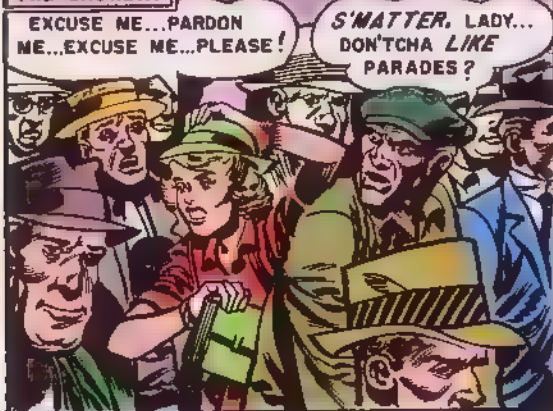


THE SHOPS WILL BE EMPTY! EVERYONE WILL BE WATCHING! IT'S A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO DO SOME SHOPPING!

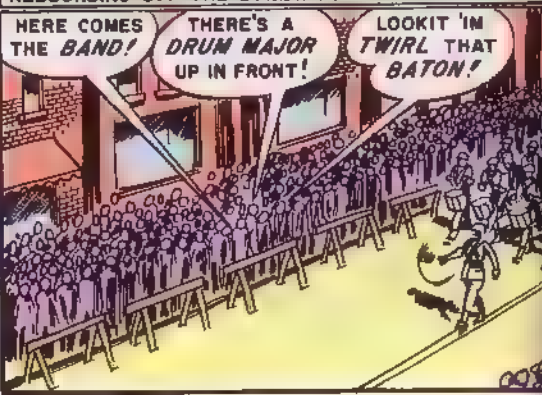
ALL RIGHT, HONEY! I'LL WAIT RIGHT HERE TILL YOU GET BACK!



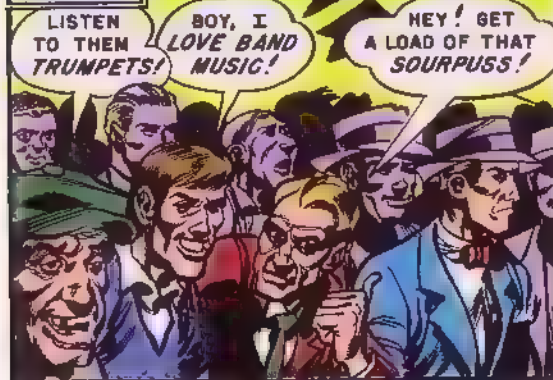
THE YOUNG WOMAN LEFT HER HUSBAND STANDING AT THE CURB AND ELBOWED HER WAY THROUGH THE CROWD...



A ROAR WENT UP FROM THE CROWD! WAY UP THE MAIN STREET, SUNLIGHT GLINTED ON SOMETHING SHINY! BRASSY MUSIC ECHOED OVER THE THRONG, RESOUNDING OFF THE BUILDINGS...



THE STEADY BOOM-BOOM OF THE BASE DRUM WAS GROWING LOUDER NOW! THE MAN ON THE CURB WHOSE WIFE HAD LEFT HIM TO GO SHOPPING, SCOWLED...



THE DRUM MAJOR PASSED IN FRONT OF THE SCOWLING GENTLEMAN...HIS CHROMIUM BATON SPINNING! BEHIND HIM, THE BLARING BAND FOLLOWED... THEIR DRESS-LEGGINGS MOVING IN UNISON...



THE GENERAL, BEDECKED WITH RIBBONS, MARCHED IN THE CENTER OF THE STREET...WELL IN BACK OF THE BAND! DIRECTLY BEHIND HIM, A COLUMN OF INFANTRYMEN IN CLASS-A UNIFORMS FOLLOWED! THE MAN ON THE CURB'S SCOWL TURNED TO A SMIRK...



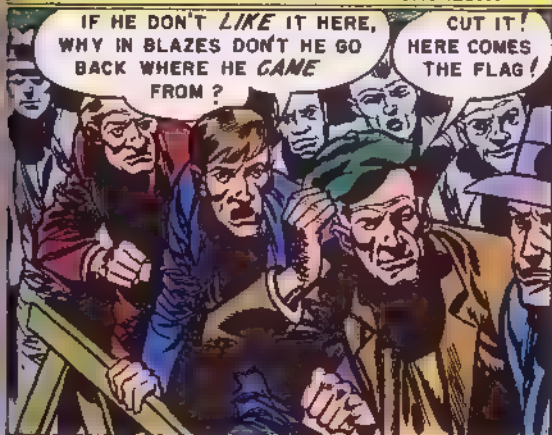
NEXT CAME ANOTHER COLUMN OF SOLDIERS! THESE CARRIED NO GUNS...



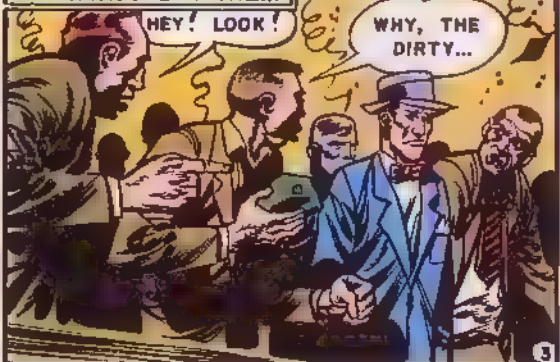
THE SMIRK OF THE MAN ON THE CURB TURNED TO A SNEER...



UP THE STREET, HATS WERE COMING OFF! BARE HEADS WERE CARESSSED BY THE GENTLE SPRING BREEZES! THE COLOR-GUARD APPROACHED...



THE FLAG RIPPLED! ITS CRIMSON AND WHITE STRIPES ROLLED OVER AND OVER! THE BLUE FIELD AND WHITE STARS SPARKLED IN THE SUN-LIGHT! ALL HEADS WERE BARE AS IT PASSED! ALL HEADS BUT ONE...



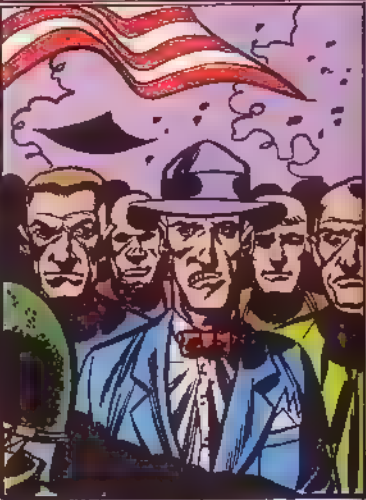
THE SNEERING MAN ON THE CURB
STARED AT THE RED, WHITE, AND
BLUE...



BUT HE MADE NO MOVE TO TAKE
OFF HIS HAT...



HE JUST STOOD THERE, SNEERING,
AS THE FLAG WENT BY...



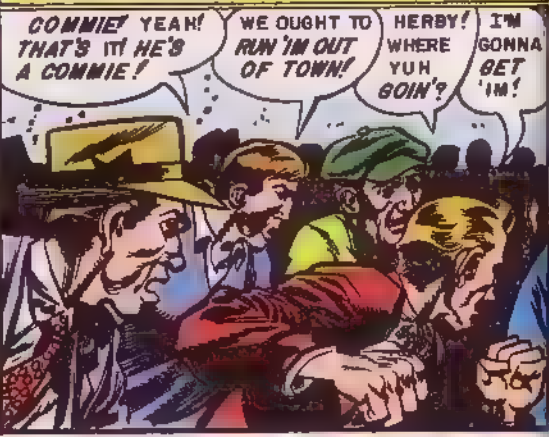
SUDDENLY A PAIR OF CYMBALS CRASHED, AND
ANOTHER BAND BEHIND THE COLOR GUARD EXPLODED
INTO A BRASSY BLARING MARCH TEMPO...



WHAD'YUH
SAY, CHARLIE?

I SAID HE MUST
BE ONE OF THEM
LOUSY REDS!

THE BASE DRUM BOOMED...TIMING THE PARADER'S
STRIDES...DROWNING OUT THE ANGRY CAT-CALLS...



COMMIE! YEAH!
THAT'S IT! HE'S
A COMMIE!

WE OUGHT TO
RUN 'IM OUT
OF TOWN!

HERBY!
WHERE
YUH
GOIN'?

I'M
GONNA
GET
'IM!

THE ONE CALLED HERBY PUSHED HIS WAY TO THE
SMIRKING MAN ON THE CURB! HE GRABBED THE
MAN'S SHOULDER AND SPUN HIM AROUND...



BEAT IT, BUDDY!

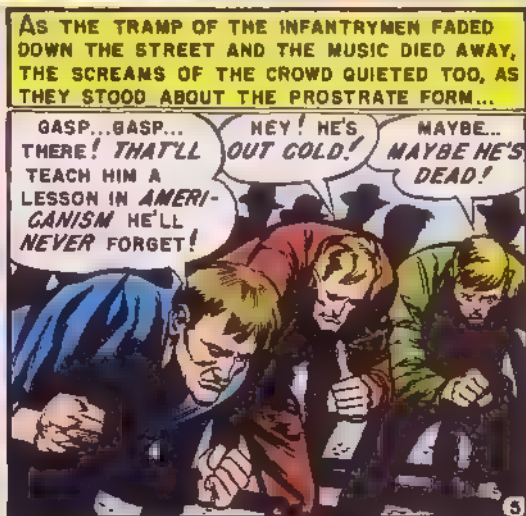
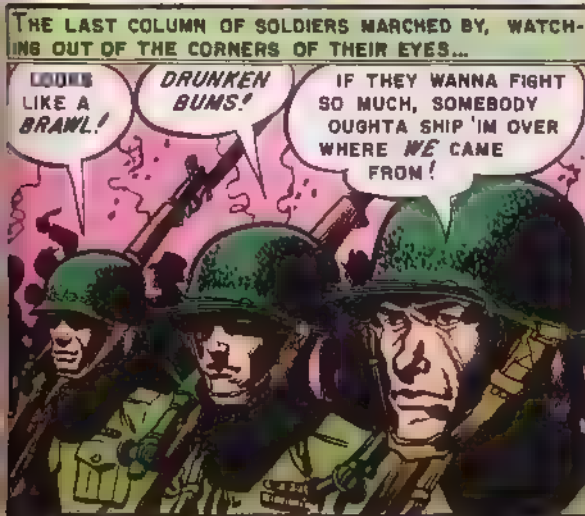
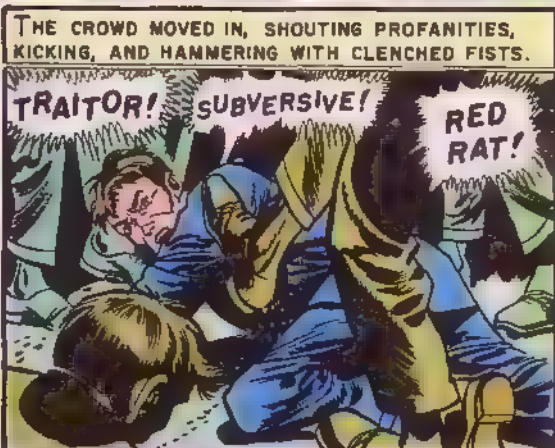
I... I BEG YOUR
PARDON?!

THE OTHERS CROWDED AROUND...



I SAID *BEAT IT!* WE
DON'T WANT GUYS LIKE
YOU HANGIN' AROUND!

LOOK! GO AWAY, HUH?
THIS IS A FREE
COUNTRY! I'LL STAY
HERE AS LONG AS
I...



THE SOUND OF MUSIC WAS GONE NOW! THE BUNTING HUNG LIMP AND STILL! THE BREEZE HAD DIED! SUDDENLY THE CLATTER OF A WOMAN'S HEELS ECHOED THROUGH THE THICK SILENCE...

FREDDY? *FREDDY?*
ARE YOU IN THERE?

HEY! IT'S
HIS *BROAD!*

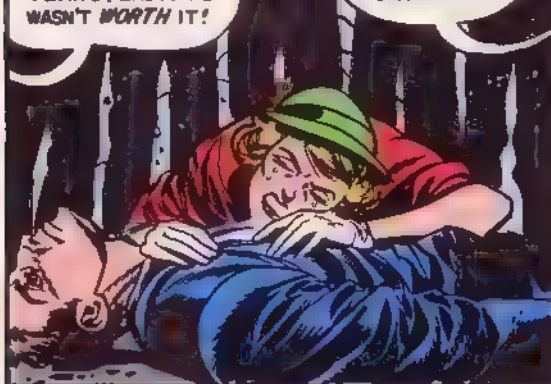
THIS GUY
IS DEAD!
WE... WE
KILLED
'IM!



A SCREAM KNIFED INTO THE GATHERING TWILIGHT!
THE YOUNG WOMAN FELL ACROSS THE DEAD MAN'S CHEST, SOBBING HYSTERICALLY...

DON'T WASTE YOUR
TEARS, LADY! HE
WASN'T WORTH IT!

THE COMMIE
B*H*H!



THE YOUNG WOMAN'S BODY SHOOK AS SHE WHIMPERED!
THEY COULDN'T TELL IF SHE WAS LAUGHING OR CRYING...

HE... HE... HE WANTED TO COME
DOWN... TO GREET HIS *OLD OUTFIT*...
SOB! THEY... THEY... THEY *DID* THE
BEST THEY COULD PUTTING HIS
FACE BACK TOGETHER AFTER THE
SHELL TORE IT OFF! SOB... ONLY WHEN
HE SMILED... IT LOOKED LIKE HE
WAS *SNEERING!*

OLD OUTFIT?
YOU MEAN HE...
HE... *FOUGHT*
THERE... IN
KOREA?



AH! IT *SERVES*
HIM RIGHT!
THE DIRTY...

FREDDY?
FRED...

FREDDY!



THE YOUNG WOMAN TURNED HER TEAR-STAINED FACE
UPWARD, STARING AT THE GRIM MOB GATHERED
AROUND HER...

WHY. SOB...
SOB?

WHY?
WHY DID
YOU DO
IT?

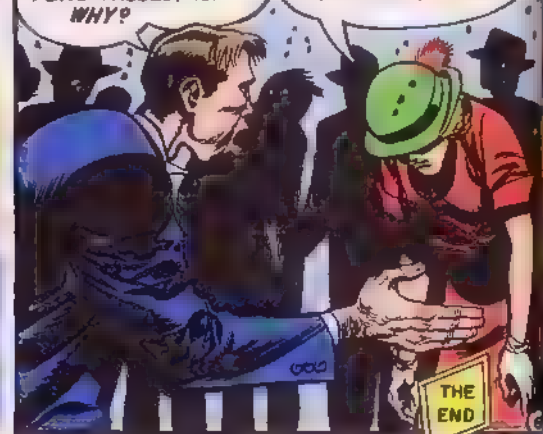
HE WAS A DIRTY
RED, LADY! *SNEERING*
AT OUR BOYS JUST COMIN'
BACK FROM OVER
THERE!

AND
INSULTING
OUR FLAG...
NOT TAKIN'
OFF HIS
HAT!



WHY DIDN'T HE TAKE
OFF HIS HAT WHEN THE
FLAG PASSED, HUH?
WHY?

HE HE DIDN'T *KNOW!*
HE *COULDN'T* SEE IT!
HE WAS... *BLIND!*



THE
END

FOR... SHEER, STARK HORROR, READ THIS TERRIFYING TALE...
GUARANTEED TO JAR YOU OUT OF YOUR SEAT!

HALLOWEEN!



A HORROR SUSPENSE STORY

I FIRST CAME TO BRIARWOOD ORPHAN ASYLUM LAST SUMMER IN ANSWER TO A NEWSPAPER AD MR CRITCHIT HAD PLACED! EBAN CRITCHIT WAS MASTER OF BRIARWOOD! HE WAS SEARCHING FOR A MATRON TO HELP HIM IN HIS TASK OF LOOKING AFTER THE ORPHAN CHILDREN, AND I WAS SORELY IN NEED OF A JOB...

MY NAME IS ANN DENNIS!
I SAW YOUR AD...

COME IN,
MISS
DENNIS!
SIT DOWN!

MR CRITCHIT'S OFFICE WAS A SKIMPILY FURNISHED ROOM IN ONE WING OF THE RUN-DOWN BUILDING THAT SERVED AS THE ORPHAN HOME! I SAT DOWN GINGERLY ON THE THREADBARE, WELL-WORN CHAIR HE'D OFFERED ME AND LOOKED AROUND! DUST COVERED EVERYTHING! THE WINDOWS AND FLOORS WERE FILTHY AND NEEDED A THOROUGH WASHING BADLY

I I'VE BEEN TERRIBLY
SHORT OF HELP, MISS
DENNIS!

I DIDN'T MEAN TO
STARE, MR.
CRITCHIT!



EBAN CRITCHIT WAS FAT AND POMPOUS! HIS FLABBY JOWLS SAGGED OVER HIS WRINKLED SHIRT COLLAR, AND BEADS OF PERSPIRATION COVERED HIS OVAL COUNTENANCE...

YOUR JOB WILL BE A SIMPLE ONE, MISS DENNIS! OVERSEEING THE CHILDREN WILL BE YOUR MAIN DUTY!

HOW MANY CHILDREN ARE THERE, MR. CRITCHIT?

THIRTY-FOUR! THEY RANGE IN AGE FROM FOUR TO FOURTEEN! ASIDE FROM SEEING THAT THEY ARE WELL-BEHAVED... AND SEVERELY DISCIPLINED WHEN BAD...YOUR PRIME CONCERN WILL BE IN SUPPLYING THEM WITH AN ADEQUATE EDUCATION! YOU WILL RECEIVE BOARD AND LODGING AND SEVENTY-FIVE DOLLARS A MONTH! WILL YOU TAKE THE JOB?

ALTHOUGH THE SALARY WAS VERY LOW, I WAS FORCED TO ACCEPT THE POSITION! SINCE I'D BEEN OUT OF WORK FOR SOME TIME, MY SAVINGS HAD DISAPPEARED! BESIDES...I LIKED CHILDREN...

I'LL TAKE THE JOB, MR. CRITCHIT!

GOOD! I'LL SHOW YOU YOUR ROOM!

MR. CRITCHIT LED ME DOWN A DARK DIRTY HALL TO A DOOR MARKED 'PRIVATE'. HE TURNED THE KNOB AND THE DOOR SQUEELED OPEN ON RUSTY HINGES! INSIDE, A TARNISHED IRON BED STOOD AGAINST ONE WALL! A PAINT-PEELED WOODEN DRESSER STOOD OPPOSITE! ASIDE FROM THESE AND A PLAIN WOODEN CHAIR, THERE WERE NO OTHER FURNISHINGS...

I...I WOULD LIKE A LAMP, MR. CRITCHIT! I READ AT NIGHT!

ELECTRICITY COSTS MONEY, MISS DENNIS! I'LL BRING YOU SOME CANDLES...BUT THEY'LL HAVE TO COME OUT OF YOUR PAY!

I HAD A SUDDEN URGE TO LEAVE! THEN, FROM ACROSS THE COURT BEYOND THE DIRTY CRACKED WINDOW OF MY ROOM, I HEARD THE HEART-BREAKING SOBS OF A CHILD CRYING...

I...I SEE! ALL RIGHT! IF YOU'LL GET THEM FOR ME!

CERTAINLY! I'LL BE RIGHT BACK! OH! ONE MORE THING, MISS DENNIS!

MR. CRITCHIT'S FACE WAS STERN...HIS EYES BURNING...

YES, MR. CRITCHIT?

THE CHILDREN ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY, MISS DENNIS! THE BUSINESS OF *RUNNING* BRIARWOOD IS *MINE*! YOU WILL DO WELL TO INTEREST YOURSELF *ONLY* WITH WHAT CONCERNS *YOU*!

THEN HE WAS GONE! I STARTED TO UNPACK! MEANWHILE, THE CHILD ACROSS THE COURT CONTINUED TO CRY! A LITTLE LATER, MR. CRITCHIT RETURNED WITH A FEW CANDLES, AND I LIT ONE! ITS CHEERY GLOW PUSHED BACK THE GATHERING GLOOM! FINALLY, I COULD STAND IT NO LONGER...

THAT POOR CHILD HAS BEEN CRYING FOR OVER AN HOUR! I'VE GOT TO SEE WHAT'S *WRONG*!

I PICKED UP THE CANDLE AND WENT OUT OF MY ROOM! I MADE MY WAY DOWN THE DARK MUSTY CORRIDOR UNTIL I CAME TO A DOOR MARKED 'DORMITORY'. THE MUFFLED SOBS CAME FROM WITHIN! I TURNED THE KNOB! THE DOOR WOULD NOT OPEN...

IT...IT'S LOCKED!

SOB...SOB...SOB...



A KEY HUNG ON A HOOK IN THE DOOR JAMB! I REMOVED IT AND INSERTED IT IN THE LOCK! THE DOOR SWUNG OPEN! THE CANDLELIGHT KNIFED INTO THE BLACKNESS...

GOOD GRIEF!



IT WAS HORRIBLE! THIRTY-FOUR FILTHY BEDS LINED THE ROOM, MATTRESS TO MATTRESS! GAUNT FACES PEERED AT ME WITH WIDE FRIGHTENED EYES! THE CHILD THAT WAS CRYING WRITHED ON A BED AT THE FAR END OF THE ROOM! I MOVED DOWN THE LITTERED AISLE TOWARD IT...

I IGNORED THEIR REMARKS IN MY CONCERN OVER THE SOBBING CHILD! IT WAS A YOUNG GIRL...SIX OR SEVEN! WHEN I PLACED MY HAND ON HER SHOULDER TO COMFORT HER, SHE SCREAMED...

I...I WON'T HURT YOU, DEAR!

GO...GO AWAY! LEAVE ME ALONE!



WHAT IS IT, CHILD? WHAT HURTS YOU?

IT'S HER STOMACH, LADY! SHE CRIES LIKE THAT AFTER EVERY MEAL!

DID YOU EAT TOO MUCH, HONEY?

THAT'S A LAUGH! 'EAT TOO MUCH.' WE DON'T GET HARDLY ANYTHING TO EAT!

SOMEBODY'S ALWAYS GETTIN' SICK FROM THE FOOD!

WE NEVER GET ANY MILK!

THE MEAT ALWAYS SMELLS FUNNY!



I LOOKED AROUND AT THE PALE SUNKEN FACES BEFORE ME! THEY WERE THE SALLOW FACES OF UNDERNOURISHED CHILDREN...THIN AND WHITE FROM WANT OF GOOD FOOD! THEIR BELLIES WERE BLOATED...THEIR ARMS AND LEGS LIKE STICKS! I COMFORTED THE SICK CHILD...TALKED TO THE OTHERS...

MY NAME IS MISS DENNIS! I'M GOING TO SEE THAT YOU'LL BE WELL TAKEN CARE OF FROM NOW ON!

AW, THAT'S WHAT THE LAST LADY SAID WHEN SHE FIRST CAME! SHE TURNED OUT TO BE JUST LIKE HIM!

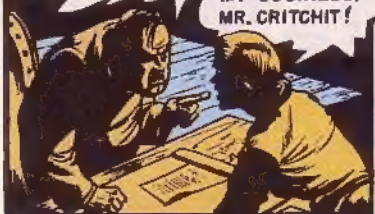


I TOLD YOU, MISS DENNIS! RUNNING BRIARWOOD IS MY BUSINESS! THE CHILDREN ARE YOURS!

WHEN A CHILD CRIES HALF THE NIGHT FROM HUNGER, THEN FEEDING THEM BECOMES MY BUSINESS, MR. CRITCHIT!

I DO THE BEST I CAN, MISS DENNIS! I'M ALLOWED ONLY SO MUCH PER CHILD! FOOD PRICES HAVE RISEN! THE ALLOTMENTS HAVEN'T!

I... I'M SORRY, MR. CRITCHIT! I DIDN'T KNOW!



I PAID THE EXTRA MONEY FROM MY OWN POCKET! I COULDN'T HELP IT! THE GAUNT FACES OF THE CHILDREN PLAGUED MY MIND! I DIDN'T TELL MR. CRITCHIT ABOUT IT! AS SUMMER PASSED AND AUTUMN DREW NEAR, THEIR LITTLE BODIES BEGAN TO FILL OUT! THEN...ONE DAY...

YOU WANTED TO SEE ME, SIR?

BAD NEWS, MISS DENNIS! THE ALLOTMENTS HAVE BEEN CUT!



THE NEXT MORNING, I WENT TO SEE MR. CRITCHIT IN HIS OFFICE...

WHY, MISS DENNIS! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? WHY AREN'T YOU HAVING BREAKFAST WITH THE CHILDREN?

BREAKFAST, YOU CALL IT! I RETCHED WHEN I TASTED IT! IS THAT THE BEST YOU CAN FEED THEM, MR. CRITCHIT?



AND SO, BESIDES THE OTHER DUTIES I HAD, I VOLUNTEERED TO BUY AND SUPERVISE THE PREPARATION OF THE FOOD FOR THE CHILDREN FROM THE MEAGER AMOUNT MR. CRITCHIT GAVE ME EACH WEEK.

THAT WILL BE SIXTEEN DOLLARS, MA'AM!

OH, DEAR! THAT'S TOO MUCH! I ONLY HAVE TWELVE! WAIT! HERE! HERE'S FOUR MORE!



BUT... BUT THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE, MR. CRITCHIT! THE CHILDREN BARELY HAVE ENOUGH TO EAT NOW!

I'M AWARE OF THAT, MISS DENNIS! AND YOUR WISE SHOPPING AND CAREFUL SUPERVISION HAVE DONE WONDERS! BUT THAT'S THE SITUATION! I'M SORRY!



BESIDE THE FOOD PROBLEM, ANOTHER CONDITION BECAME INTOLERABLE FOR ME! THE CHILDREN'S CLOTHES! THEIR GARMENTS WERE ILL-FITTING AND RAGGED! I'D PATCHED AND REPATCHED THEM...

OH, TOMMY! ANOTHER TORN PAIR OF PANTS!

I... I'M SORRY, MISS DENNIS! I COULDN'T HELP IT! I JUST BENT OVER... AND ... SOB... AND...



AS FAR AS THE SANITARY CONDITIONS AT THE HOME WERE CONCERNED, I SOLVED THAT PROBLEM HAPPILY! THE CHILDREN WERE EASILY RECRUITED INTO BUCKET AND MOP BRIGADES AND WE RENDERED BRIARWOOD SPOTLESS...

YOU'VE DONE ADMIRABLY, MISS DENNIS!

I DO MY BEST, MR. CRITCHIT!



BY SEPTEMBER, I'D ALREADY SPENT MY SALARY ON SUPPLEMENTING THE CHILDREN'S FOOD, CLOTHING, AND EDUCATION ALLOWANCES! BUT I DIDN'T MIND! I'D GROWN SO FOND OF THEM...

YOU'RE WONDERFUL, MISS DENNIS!

PEACH? WE'RE SO LUCKY TO HAVE YOU!



MR. CRITCHIT GAVE ME VERY LITTLE FOR CLOTHES TOO... FAR TOO LITTLE TO BUY WHAT WAS NEEDED! ON MY DAYS OFF, I FOUND MYSELF PUSHING DOORBELLS...

I'M FROM BRIARWOOD ORPHAN ASYLUM! I WONDER IF YOU MIGHT HAVE SOME OLD CLOTHES YOUR CHILDREN HAVE OUT-GROWN?

SCRAM, LADY! THAT'S AN OLD RACKET!



AND THEN OCTOBER ROLLED AROUND! THE NIGHTS BECAME CHILLY, BUT MR. CRITCHIT SUPPLIED NO HEAT! I COMPLAINED...

WE'VE GOT TO CONSERVE OUR FUEL TILL WE REALLY NEED IT, MISS DENNIS!

I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT, MR. CRITCHIT!



TOWARD THE END OF OCTOBER MY MONTH'S SALARY RAN OUT AGAIN! THE CHILDREN BEGAN TO DROP GENTLE HINTS! HALLOWEEN WAS COMING...

DO YOU THINK MR. CRITCHIT WOULD LET US CELEBRATE HALLOWEEN, MISS DENNIS?

I... I DON'T KNOW! JUST ONE PUMPKIN... WITH A CANDLE IN IT? IT'D BE SO MUCH FUN!



BUT WHEN I APPROACHED MR. CRITCHIT ABOUT THE PUMPKIN, HE SHOOK HIS HEAD...

NO! I'M SORRY, MISS DENNIS! WE HAVE NO MONEY TO THROW AWAY ON TRIVIALITIES LIKE PUMPKINS!

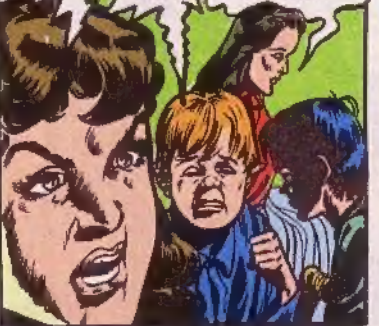
BUT IT WOULD MAKE THE CHILDREN SO HAPPY, MR. CRITCHIT!



BUT MR. CRITCHIT WAS FIRM!
HE ABSOLUTELY REFUSED TO
SPEND A DIME! THE CHILDREN
RECEIVED THE NEWS WITH BIT-
TERNESS...

HE...HE'S
ROTTEN!
I **HATE**
HIM!

YOU MUSTN'T
TALK LIKE THAT,
CHILDREN!



WHEN OCTOBER THIRTY-FIRST
ARRIVED, THE CHILDREN WERE
SILENT AND SULLEN! OUTSIDE
THE ASYLUM GATES, AS DUSK
BEGAN TO FALL, BOYS AND
GIRLS OF THE TOWN...LUCKY
ONES WHO HAD PARENTS...
HOOTED AND HOWLED IN THEIR
HALLOWEEN COSTUMES...

HALLOWEEN! HOOOOOOH!



THE ORPHAN CHILDREN CROWDED
AROUND THE WINDOWS...PRESS-
ING THEIR NOSES UP AGAINST THE
CHILLY GLASS...WATCHING...WATCH-
ING WITH ENVY...

LOOK!
THERE'S A
PUMPKIN!

GOLLY!
I WISH
WE HAD
ONE!

I...SOB...
SOB...



FINALLY, I COULDN'T STAND IT ANY LONGER! I
WAS DETERMINED THAT THE CHILDREN WOULD
CELEBRATE HALLOWEEN NO MATTER WHAT! I
WENT TO MR. CRITCHIT'S OFFICE TO ASK FOR AN
ADVANCE ON MY NEXT MONTH'S SALARY...

MR. CRITCHIT! I...I...
HE ISN'T **HERE!**



I SAT DOWN TO WAIT! OUTSIDE BRIARWOOD,
DISTANT SHRIEKS OF LAUGHTER AND CRIES OF
JOY DRIFTED INTO THE HALLOWEEN AIR! SOME-
THING ON MR. CRITCHIT'S DESK CAUGHT MY EYE!
I GOT UP AND LOOKED AT IT...

IT...IT'S A **CHECK...** FROM THE
STATE! NOVEMBER ALLOTMENT...
FOR THIRTY-FOUR ORPHANS!



I ALMOST SCREAMED OUT LOUD WHEN I SAW
THE FIGURE! IT WAS **THREE TIMES AS MUCH**
AS MR. CRITCHIT HAD BEEN SPENDING ON THE
ORPHANS! SUDDENLY, THE PICTURE WAS VERY
CLEAR...

HE...HE'S BEEN **STEALING** FROM THE
CHILDREN...**SKIMPING ON THE EXPENSES**
AND **POCKETING THE DIFFERENCE!**



THE DOOR BEHIND ME SLAMMED! MR. CRITCHIT
LOOMED IN THE CANDLELIGHT...HIS FAT ROUND
FACE PURPLE WITH RAGE...

WHAT ARE
YOU DOING
HERE?

I KNOW WHAT YOU'VE
BEEN UP TO, MR. CRITCHIT!
YOU'RE NOTHING BUT A
DIRTY GRIMINAL...LEECHING
ON THOSE POOR ORPHANS!



ALL OF MY ANGER AND RESENTMENT
SPILLED OVER AS I SCREAMED AT
HIM... ACCUSED HIM...

NOW THAT YOU
KNOW, MISS
DENNIS, WHAT
ARE YOU GOING
TO DO?

I'M GOING
TO REPORT
YOU TO THE
AUTHORITIES!

HE CAME AT ME... HIS PUDDY HANDS
REACHING OUT...

I... I DON'T THINK
SO, MISS DENNIS!
I DON'T THINK
SO AT ALL!

KEEP AWAY
FROM ME,
YOU... YOU...

HIS HANDS CLOSED ABOUT MY
THROAT! THINGS BEGAN TO SPIN!
THE SHRILL GRIES OF CHILDREN
FILLED THE ROOM AS I PASSED
OUT...

HALLOWEEN!
BEWARE! HOOOON!

I CAME TO WITH SHRIEKS OF DELIGHT ECHOING IN
MY POUNDING BRAIN! I SAT UP! I WAS ON THE FLOOR
OF MR. CRITCHIT'S OFFICE! A SEARING PAIN ENCIRCLED
MY THROAT WHERE HIS FAT FINGERS HAD DUG IN...

MR. CRITCHIT! HE... HE'S NOT HERE!

I STUMBLED TO THE DOOR AND FLUNG IT OPEN! THE
CHILDREN'S LAUGHTER AND SQUEELS OF JOY WAFTED
DOWN THE CORRIDOR TOWARD ME! ONE OF THEM
DASHED BY, GIGGLING, HER TINY, HAPPY FACE SMUDGED
WITH BURNT GORK...

DON'T... WORRY... MARY! YOU'LL
HAVE YOUR PUMPKIN YET!
I'M GOING... TO...

AN EERIE LIGHT CREPT AROUND THE CORNER OF THE CORRIDOR!
I COULD HEAR THE STAMPING OF TINY FEET COMING TOWARD ME!
MARY LOOKED UP AT ME WITH BRIGHT SHINING EYES...

OH, THAT'S ALL RIGHT,
MISS DENNIS! WE'VE
GOT OUR PUMPKIN... NOW!
WE MADE IT OURSELVES!

OH?

THEY TURNED THE CORNER... TRAMPING
TOWARD ME! THE GRINNING PUMPKIN'S
EYES FLICKERED FROM THE CANDLE LIT
INSIDE! BUT AS THEY NEARED, A COLD
KNIFE OF HORROR SLICED DEEP INTO MY
CHEST! YES, THE CHILDREN HAD THEIR
PUMPKIN! MR. CRITCHIT'S HOLLOWED
HEAD LEERED UP AT ME... IT'S EYES
AND NOSE CUT AWAY TO PERMIT THE
LIGHT TO SHINE THROUGH...

GOOD
LORD!

THE
END.